

Polar Vortex or Polar Express?

Numismagram Newsletter #17 (II/2019)

While most of the United States has been gripped by extreme cold over the past week or so, we here in California have fortunately been able to escape it. That's not to say that it hasn't been rather chilly in the mornings, but 40°F is much better than the sub-zero temperatures bringing much of the country to a halt. How awful have those temperatures been? So cold that steaming water, when thrown up into the air, freezes completely before falling to the ground. So cold that unprotected skin can suffer frostbite in a matter of seconds. So cold that rails are being set on fire in order to facilitate trains. Wait, what?



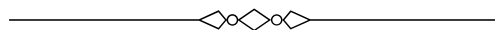
In Chicago, Metra rail operators have turned to using fire to help in the melting of snow and ice that have created blockages between switches and the stationary rails. This can obviously lead to some very interesting images such as the one above.

Speaking of railroad images which you wouldn't see every day, how about a personification of Fortune sprinkling coins along the rails while seated upon the buffers of an oncoming locomotive?



(<https://shoutout.wix.com/so/c2MYfxn0N/c?w=7N9Jw0Gueih44Jz--wEH9ev29i8POClj3fvOmKpXVO0.eyJ1ljoiaHR0cDovL251bWlzbWFncmFtLmNvbS9wcm9kdWN0LXBf>)

This is just one of the train-related medals in this month's upload. If you're a fan of the "iron horse" in medallic form, be sure to check out all three which we have new in stock!



Now that it is February, we are just one day removed from Groundhog Day here in America—a popular, light-hearted tradition in which a groundhog emerging from its hole is observed in order to see if its shadow appears. If there is *no* shadow, spring will come early! If there *is* a shadow, six more weeks of winter will be on the horizon. The tradition here dates back into the early 1800's, whereupon it was not always associated with a groundhog, but, in fact, a bear. I remember a late 19th century journal entry from my great-great-grandfather in which he wrote about "the bear seeing his shadder."

This association with a bear comes from German-speaking areas of Europe (*hence the growth of the tradition in a Pennsylvania Dutch town like Punxsutawney*), and itself is a folk holiday coinciding with the catholic Candlemas. An 1893 newspaper article refers to it as such, and also mentions that it has come to mean, according to the old adage, "half the wood and half the hay," or that roughly half of the wood which one will need to burn and half of the hay which one will need to feed to one's animals has likely been used up—a wintry halfway point of some sorts. In any event, we have a few bears in stock that definitely do not see their "shadders," so maybe that means that spring is just around the corner!



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(<https://shoutout.wix.com/so/c2MYfxn0N/c?w=V77Jhn8KULIIM0Qj3Jpb-1BHqS-arQxUNfiAHhGyA4w.eyJ1ljoiaHR0cDovL251bWlzbWFncmFtLmNvbS9wcm9kdWN0LXBhZ2UvMTAwI>

If, however, spring isn't just around the corner, never fear, for here are some blooming daffodils to remind you of springtime warmth and regrowth...even if your train tracks are on fire...

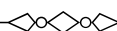


(https://shoutout.wix.com/so/c2MYfxn0N/c?w=NWh8caQOYmLrg_yZkeCvGzOM2AjrRTq8SYOdJKC5V-4.eyJ1ljoiaHR0cDovL251bWlzbWFncmFtLmNvbS9wcm9kdWN0LXBhZ2UvMTAwNTY1liwicil6lj3NW)

In addition to the pieces above, this month's upload features some attractive Wiener architectural types, two extremely rare and prooflike Brandenburg silver medals, a charming proclamation medal from Mexico, an artistic piece for the cardiologists out there, a Darwin evolution medal, and some other attractively toned examples.



(<https://shoutout.wix.com/so/c2MYfxn0N/c?w=PKbiC5gjp8DsK0d8DgN1T4Q4sa-IIHbQWcwhcRSfyk.eyJ1ljoiaHR0cDovL251bWlzbWFncmFtLmNvbS9pbmZlbnRvcnkilCJyljoimjM1NT>)



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